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DISCOURSE.

THE ADAPTATION OF THE TRUTH TO PROMOTE THE SALVATION OF MEN.

A DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED

AT THE INSTALLATION OF

REV. OREN SIKES,

OVER

THE TRINITARIAN CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH AND SOCIETY,

IN BEDFORD, MASS., JUNE 3, 1846.

7551.303

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PASTOR OF THE THIRD CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
IN PORTLAND, MAINE.

Published by request of the Church in Bedford.

BOSTON:
A. J. WRIGHT'S STEAM PRESS,
NO. 3 WATER STREET.
1846.

NOV 17 1906

DISCOURSE.

JAMES 1 : 18. "*Of His own will begat He us, with the Word of truth.*"

JOHN 17 : 17. "*Sanctify them through thy truth ; thy Word is truth.*"

ONE characteristic of the writers of the New Testament, is the peculiar significance of the words which they technically use. Matthew and John, Paul and James, and Peter, although writing upon subjects which were in one sense entirely new, and although they were thus constrained to adopt an appropriate phraseology, are not chargeable—as are so many writers—with the frequent coining of new words, with the introduction of uncouth and often unintelligible phrases. As writing under the guidance of inspiration upon themes most momentous to their fellow men universally, they have obviously endeavored to render themselves intelligible and familiar to every reader; to the peasant and the child, no less than to the philosopher; but they are not less remarkable for the precision and energy, than the simplicity of their expressions. The words "faith, love, hope, adoption, redemption, salvation," with many others,—words almost as common as household phrases,—have been thus made to constitute, as it were, an entirely new language, which has essentially modified the course of human thought for the last eighteen centuries.

Among these most expressive words, is that which terminates each of the separate passages selected for the text,—the word, "Truth." Its recurrence on the pages of

the New Testament is almost constant, and it is used, as all are aware, in a variety of senses. It denotes not only as in its ordinary signification, contrariety to falsehood, or the accordance of our declarations with facts; but in its scriptural import it also denotes the reality, as opposed to nonentities or delusions,—as, "the true God," in distinction from imaginary deities; and also the infallible verity of the divine declarations as contrasted with the assertions of men,—as, "thy word is truth." Still another of these peculiar significations, though closely allied to the last, is, the perfect verity of the gospel system as promulgated in the writings and preaching of the apostles, in contrast with every scheme of religion which had been devised and promulgated by men. The one is "the truth;" all the others are "the deceivableness of unrighteousness," and "a lie." Such is the general import of the word, Truth, as used in the text. That we may ascertain it still more precisely, I will refer for the moment to several other passages of an obviously kindred meaning. "Not handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves;"—"chosen to salvation through belief of the truth;"—"the truth of the gospel;"—"seeing ye have purified your souls, in obeying the truth,"—"thy word is truth." The meaning which we are thus instructed to attach to the word "truth," or to the more frequent form of expression,—"the truth," is evidently this,—The system of religious truth which is revealed in the gospel, as the supreme directory of our faith and conduct. This, as it is affirmed in the text, is God's appointed means of renewing and sanctifying the soul. Such is also the constant scriptural affirmation respecting its efficacy. While the Holy Spirit is uniformly described as the supreme Agent in the accomplishment of these great results, the Truth is uniformly asserted to be the instrument or the means, so that the agency and the instrumentality are to be ever deemed inseparable.

When we contemplate this unalterable connection between God's sovereign energy and the efficacy of Truth, and thus discern, as it were, the process by which depraved man is ultimately prepared for admission to the purity and bliss of heaven, we are naturally led to inquire, What is there in the Truth itself which renders it thus efficacious? why has it been constituted the invariable means in the production of this result? In establishing this connection the divine wisdom must be no less conspicuous than in every other great measure of God's moral government, and it must be profitable to trace out the characteristic displays of this attribute, which are here visible. I have accordingly selected, as a theme which is ever instructive and which is peculiarly appropriate to the present occasion, THE ADAPTATION OF THE TRUTH TO PROMOTE THE SALVATION OF MEN. To evince this, will be the design of the ensuing course of remark.

We might argue, I would then proceed to observe, the reality of this Adaptation, from the great fact that God has been pleased to establish this inseparable connection between the agency of His Spirit, and the instrumentality of the Truth. It is an ultimate principle with all whom I am here intentionally addressing, that God is directed by His wisdom in every department of His natural and moral government. Whether in the structure of a rose leaf or of the sparrow's wing,—whether in the ascent of vapor, or in its descent when condensed into the rain drop and the snow flake,—whether in the constitution of man and of the seraph as free agents, or in the promulgation of His law as the universal standard of moral rectitude,—we profess to discern a perfect adaptation of means to ends; and wherever a similar adaptation is but faintly perceptible, we doubt not that it no less unquestionably exists. In accordance with this principle, we necessarily admit and affirm that the efficacy, which the Truth exerts upon every heart which is actually renewed and sanctified, ha

not been arbitarily imparted to it by the Most High. God has not established this connection, we would say in other words, as a mere act of sovereignty; the Truth is in itself intrinsically adapted to the promotion of this result. This conclusion may be, however, more satisfactorily established in a different manner, and I shall endeavor accordingly to evince this Adaptation of the Truth, from a consideration of the Nature of the Truth itself; and also of the Nature of Man, to whom it is addressed.

1. *The Nature of the Truth itself* evinces its Adaptation to promote the salvation of men.

We speak of the nature of matter and of its various forms, of the nature of mind, as considered abstractly, or as in the individual man or angel, nor do we less familiarly speak of the nature of any single mental or moral operation. With the same propriety we may speak of the nature of the Truth. The gospel system, or the scheme of revealed truth, has its own appropriate character, its essential attributes, which distinguish it from every other system of faith and practice. When, then, I affirm that the Nature of the Truth evinces this Adaptation, I mean particularly, that the *great subjects of which it treats* evince this.

The Truth, or the Gospel which contains it,—for in this respect they are identical—has its appropriate subjects, as evidently as any other religious system, or any other volume. These are apparent on its very face, they are legible on every page, these announce the design of its revelation to man, these constitute its nature. What then are these subjects? One of them is God. God, the universal Creator and Preserver; God, the Benefactor, Ruler, and Judge of man; God, the Supreme and unchangeable in every natural and moral perfection—whether knowledge or power—whether righteousness, goodness, mercy or truth; the one God, and at the same time the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Another of these subjects is Man,—his nature, duty, and destiny. Man, in his intellect, free-agency and immortality, the image of Jehovah;—but man, depraved; man, endowed with many amiable natural affections, but selfish, rebellious against God, and therefore justly condemned. These subjects include also redemption, and its results. Redemption, having its foundation in the self-moved love of Jehovah, having as the great Agent in its accomplishment the incarnate Son of God, and the Holy Spirit as the Agent in the application of its blessings; and for its Results, the transformation of depraved men into disciples of Christ and friends of God, their deliverance from perdition, and their participation in the endless joys of heaven.

Of these subjects I would observe that they are the noblest conceivable. The Truth and the Gospel which embodies it, are but a solitary volume among hundreds of thousands now existing, yet how transcendently lofty are its themes, when contrasted with those of all others! Intellects the most discriminating, profound, creative, have selected many of these other themes, as those which inherently tend to enlarge the mind and to purify its tastes. But how humble are they all, whether they occupy us on the pages of the historian, the poet or the moralist; whether they have exhausted the energies of the jurist, the metaphysician, or the mathematician? The themes of Herodotus and Livy, what are they, compared with those of Matthew; or the creations of Homer and Shakspeare, when contrasted with the delineations of John; or the demonstrations of Newton, or La Place, when compared with the reasonings of Paul. The giddy or the corrupt mind may be for the season so absorbed in the subjects which these gifted mortals have treated, that levity may give place to sobriety, and profligacy may for the moment breathe the wish that it were purity. But no mind can become habitually conversant with the sub-

jects that occupy the scheme of revealed truth, which is not, as the result, removed into a far higher and purer atmosphere. These are not themes for mere intellectual speculation or for the fervid excitement of the fancy, but for deep and solemn feeling; they engross us not with the fugitive interests of the present hour, but with a stable, unchangeable eternity. God and His ceaseless superintendence of our conduct, Christ and His relations to man's inmost soul, the duty and the responsibility of this hour, and of all coming life,—can such subjects be frequently pondered and the mind still grovel in the slough of epicurism? or continue incrusted with the rust of worldliness? will conscience—if previously asleep—not awake from its lethargy, and the man begin to walk softly on his journey towards eternity, as if some angel visitant had been commissioned to warn him? Converse with these themes, however frequent and engrossing, will not indeed renew the heart, for such is its power of resistance to all holy influences that nothing will thus subdue it but the Spirit's energy; but it must at the same time continually maintain this resistance, or this intrinsic power of the truth would secure the victory. Truth thus imbedded in the mind, is the seed which has no self-germinating power, but the seed is still there, often too deeply sown to be removable, and awaiting the first genial rain and sunbeams of heaven to shoot forth towards an immortal harvest.

These subjects, I would also observe, when once cordially received, constitute salvation itself. They are not merely verbal descriptions, lifeless delineations, of salvation, but they are in themselves salvation. Holiness, whether it is developed as love to God, or as affiance in Christ, or as good will to our fellow men, is but the Truth imbodied and active. It has not in itself a distinct elementary existence, it is not—like matter or like the spirit's essence—the simple and instant product of creative ener-

gy, but it is the quality of our moral affections. These affections whether holy or sinful, whether love, trust, and humility, or enmity, unbelief and pride, have in themselves no permanent independent being; neither are they summoned into existence by a simple act of the will; they are cherished only as the effect of contemplating truth, they start into life only when the mind is in contact with some actual or supposed reality. What awakens the sigh of the far distant traveler for his country and his fireside, but their visible images which become for the moment, the very texture of his thoughts; or what kindles the angel's exulting song, as he looks downward from the celestial heights over the penitent sinner, but the present living idea of that sinner as long hopelessly lost, but as now found forever? It is then the Truth intellectually received, which brings salvation within the mind; it is the Truth cordially received, which constitutes salvation to the heart. As the clear mental reception of the theorems and problems of Euclid, renders the individual a geometer, so the doctrine of Christ crucified—wherever *written on the heart*, renders the individual a believer, so the doctrine of heaven's immortality, moulds him into a pilgrim and a stranger on earth. Salvation in its foretaste, is then but the practical reception of the truth; the Truth reveals it, the Truth presents it as the stable object of contemplation and emotion; separate from the truth it possesses virtually no existence, and when in full fruition —so far as fruition can be known on earth—it is but the ingrafted truth, producing its appropriate fruits of love, faith, and sacred joy.

As the adaptation of the Truth to promote the salvation of men is thus seen to belong to its very nature when we consider the subjects of which it treats, so we may also perceive this adaptation when we notice *its infallibility*. It is not hyperbolical to affirm that the mind is as precisely adapted in its constitution to truth, as is the eye to the light

of heaven. The eye of man was not originally formed for fogs and mists, still less for the discolored, restless medium of vision which is produced by a fever, and less still for thick darkness; but for light, clear light, only. Mists confuse it, the medium which disease occasions but inflames it, darkness quenches it. As little is the mind of man constructed for a state of blank ignorance, or for the adoption of positive error, or for vacillation between doubts and uncertainties, or for any thing but truth. Ignorance, like an exhausted receiver, occasions its suffocation; it may be occasionally wildly excited, but it speedily withers away under the dominion of error; doubts—while they exist—prevent even its hair's breadth progress; truth only is its food and strength and life. Wherever we discern truth, and however familiar the subject, there we repose with conscious certainty, there is some real enlargement of our moral being. Whether religious or scientific truth—whether it respects the operations of art or the daily occurrences of life—its influence is almost necessarily pleasing and profitable: even the bright creations of the great epic, and the great dramatic poet of our language irresistibly charm us, because they have the verisimilitude of real life—they are truth possible, if not truth actual. And however sacred or tender the theme, let doubts arise as to the veracity of the narration, or the soundness of the primary principle, or the conclusiveness of the argument, and the mind is for the time staggered or unsettled. When the fear of a future judgment, or an insatiate thirst for wealth or political eminence, or some other master passion has gradually constrained an individual to abandon the gospel scheme for some soothing form of heresy, the distinctness of his perceptions has become sensibly bedimmed, and in his willful adoption of sophistry and error he is often no less consciously perplexed and wretched. It is then truth—and truth, discerned to be such, which confers all its real worth either on art or science, on morals or religion; and

this is preëminently the case with every thing that connects the soul with salvation. It is, I would repeat it, the infallibility of the gospel system which gives it its immeasurable value; it is its infallibility, which is not only an essential prerequisite to its possession of any influence over the heart, but which also evinces its adaptation to save the heart, as God's own appointed means. That this system is infallible truth, that the entire record which contains it was given by inspiration, that the apostles spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, none will require me on such an occasion formally to prove, none probably professes to doubt. It is an infallibility which pervades it, not only as a general scheme of truth, but in each of its primary and subordinate principles; not only in the structure of each separate component book, but in its seemingly incidental statements, in its most familiar sentences, and in the simplest elements of its phraseology. The gospel system, as was observed in the introduction, is usually styled "*the* Truth"—because the record is thus infallible. It is not a cunningly devised fable, professing to be the history and the instructions of Jesus Christ, but really the mere personification of abstract goodness in man: it is not what would be but little better, the history of a revelation, drawn up by fallible and sometimes self-contradicting writers—whose occasional paralogisms we are to detect, and whose inconsistencies we are to reconcile in our superior wisdom: but it is all, aside from the unavoidable mistakes of human transcribers, the very words of the infallible Jehovah. Yes, the demonstrations of pure mathematics, or the testimony of the eye to the presence of objects in the noonday, furnishes no more satisfactory evidence of the reality of things than what attends the announcement of the gospel. Would man in ten thousand cases, after reading its solemn declarations, persuade himself to disbelieve? Such is his assurance of its perfect verity that he cannot. Would he, as an inferior refuge

shelter himself behind imagined improbabilities, or rest in equipoise—neither believing nor disbelieving? The same assurance forbids him to cherish these welcome doubts, removes him even from the covert of merely strong probabilities, till he is left visibly in the midst of its great and certain realities. He would still, it may be, turn away from the view, but they everywhere surround him; he would sink into forgetfulness of their presence, but when he awakes they are there, unchanged. Other men, even the parent, the sage, the saint, may either falsify or mistake; history, too, is often but the collection of contradictory narratives; his own senses often give him but uncertain testimony;—but the Truth, the gospel, he knows that it cannot deceive him, for the Hand which wrote the mystic characters in the hall of Belshazzar, has also written at the head of every successive page—"Thus saith the Lord."

Nor is this adaptation of the Truth less apparent, when we consider *its Authority*. We exult in the consciousness of our free agency. Free, absolutely free, as we proudly affirm, within, and our subjection to any external government being but partial and occasional only, it is indeed well for man that there is one authority which he cannot dispute, and that its voice addresses him from every record of the creation, in the constant movements of providence, and in every doctrine and precept of the gospel. It is well, nay, it is indispensable to men and angels, and the moral universe—if religion is to have an existence in that universe—that He who upholds it, should address every free agent with the voice of absolute authority. Were God to submit his claims upon the perfect love and obedience of his creatures solely to their discretion, were he to appeal to reason and conscience as the only assertors of his rights, Gabriel even—with all "the principalities and powers" of heaven—would soon follow in the track of Satan and his legions. God would be still invulnerable and unassailable in his omnipotence, but his empire would be a

chaos—all beneath his throne would be lost in anarchy and ruin. Even the purity of heaven can be made secure from defilement, only as it is guarded by the presence of His majesty. And were the Truth in all its harmony and infallibility to be spread before us but as an urgent exhortation from its Author—were men to be only advised or besought to live for conscience, for holiness, for heaven—need I ask what would be the invariable reception? Consciously free to choose or to refuse, God's throne of moral government thus virtually abdicated, no bridle on man's depravity but his own discretion,—let those who speak of their reverence for human nature, answer. There are indeed those who affirm that the mind necessarily believes in exact accordance with the degree of evidence, thus making faith in the system of Christ's salvation little else than the mere result of a law of our nature; and were this system but a treatise of pure mathematics, rigorously demonstrated and perfectly intelligible to an ordinary mind —were every individual constrained also, faithfully, to study it, then faith would be the natural and necessary result. But why speak of such absurdities! Men can, and do believe, or disbelieve, the strictest deductions of Bacon, and Locke, and Edwards—they may despise the loftiest speculations of Plato, and the profoundest researches of Aristotle, and it is nothing but the authority of the gospel which secures for its revelations a different reception. That authority speaks in every page, it has consecrated every line, and it is none other than God's right, as the moral governor of man, to require our cordial belief of His truth. No one whom philosophical or fashionable skepticism has not blinded, can fail to see the broad seal of heaven attached to each opening of the record: there an unearthly light is ever shining, there an awful voice is speaking, thence a mysterious sanctity is emanating that pervades the inmost soul. Apostles and evangelists, and prophets were the amanuenses, but they wrote at the dic-

tation of the eternal Spirit: the words, the sentences, are human, but they are uttered by a Voice from the very centre of the Throne. God has thus adapted his truth to all that is serene or exulting in hope and harrowing in fear, to conscience in all its sentences of conviction or approval, and has thus rendered it His own most fit and effectual instrument of salvation. The sense of this authority becomes sooner or later almost an instinct with every one, not hardened by profligacy or skepticism. Other volumes may moulder unopened into dust, other truth may be rejected; but *the* Truth—the gospel—it is thus inscribed wherever rests the eyes, "Believe, obey, and live: Disbelieve, and perish." God's attributes are thus all pledged to enforce its dictates, and innumerable hearts are thus made thoughtful, anxious, and in one great sense, ready for the grace that seals us heirs of salvation.

Still another intrinsic adaptation of the Truth should be noticed,—*its intelligibleness.* I intend by this term, its perfect transparency of meaning, and this is a characteristic not unfrequently overlooked, but which cannot be too highly valued. Made more familiar, as we are, with the gospel than with any other volume from the earliest childhood, and taught from that childhood to read it with feelings which scarce allow the indulgence of criticism the most reverential, we are rendered unconsciously ignorant of some of its greatest excellencies. If we would duly perceive this illustration of the subject, let us consider for the moment the manner in which the Truth would have been revealed, had such a matter been submitted to the decision of human wisdom? The philosopher would have wished it to assume the form of an elaborate and stately treatise: to the mathematician it would have been announced in the axioms and definitions, and strict demonstrations, resembling those of his favorite science: while many a profound divine would have received it as a formal and bulky system of theology. Sacred as was to be its import, the

poet would have overloaded it with the gay creations of imagination: while the man who had been moulded by an active, busy life would have wished it to be a collection of brief, practical maxims. And when I speak of the intelligibleness of the gospel, I intend that it is as unlike and as opposite to every such imaginary revelation, as is the wisdom of God to the ignorance and folly of man. It is no stately treatise, it contains not a paragraph of hard, cold, mathematical or metaphysical reasoning, it suggests not professedly one query for theological speculation. It is not a poem, it is not a collection of aphorisms for statesmen or merchants or husbandmen. But in entire diversity and contrariety to all these, it is a scheme of faith and duty which is to be incidentally formed from a succession of familiar narratives and equally familiar letters; or, if we also refer to the Old Testament, from a succession of national histories, from a code of ancient laws, from a collection of devout hymns, and from various prophecies. This infallible and authoritative truth is now announced in some brief and simple sentence, or it is a similar comment on some instructive narrative: now we read it as uttered in the breathings of the devotional hymn, now in the brief or protracted replies of familiar conversation, and now—where rendered necessary—by brief courses of reasoning. Narratives, descriptions of character, doctrines, precepts, arguments, the allegory and the familiar image, may be all interwoven in the same book; and when the grandeur and the complexity of the theme have demanded profound discussion, then, as in several of Paul's epistles, the corresponding attention of the reader is requisite. Now it is not hyperbole to affirm that the great fundamental principles which have been thus revealed, (I speak not of the processes of reasoning by which they are occasionally maintained) are more intelligible to the human mind,—to the peasant, the savage, and the child—than those of any science or art whatever. Such is the distinctness of

announcement, such the clearness of illustration, such the simplicity of the language, that all can readily comprehend the truth; while such is its solemnity, its purity, its elevation, that none can reputably contemn it. So intelligible has God thus rendered the gospel, that its immediate and its permanent impressions upon every class of minds—the philosophic no less than the ordinary, the vigorous as truly as the feeble—are visibly the same. The same grand truths respecting God and Christ, holiness and sin, salvation and judgment, are thus written, as it were, upon the very texture of the soul,—not as speculative propositions which are to be elaborately demonstrated, but as momentous facts which concern the monarch and the slave alike, for this world and the next. It is to these most grand yet most simple truths that every conscience instinctively responds; these visibly bind man to the throne of God as his moral governor; these form the basis of all serious and devout thought; these are the staff and the sunlight to the saint in his parting hour. And these are the essential truth which the Holy Spirit ever employs in effecting the great moral change in man; and how perfectly adapted, then, is the instrument to the result! Incapable in itself of accomplishing this transformation, because the depraved heart—like the strong man armed—ever successfully resists it, its adaptation is still equally perceptible, and wherever used by the Divine hand its triumph is certain.

II. *The Nature of Man, to whom the Truth is addressed,* also evinces this Adaptation.

This portion of our subject has been necessarily anticipated from time to time, in many of the preceding remarks. It requires from us, however, a distinct, though a very brief, notice.

When we speak of Man's Nature, as itself evincing the adaptation of the Truth to promote his salvation, we obviously mean his moral nature, or that element of his being to which the Truth is always addressed. When thus

contemplated, the theme is so ample, and its different aspects are so numerous, that it is scarcely practicable to notice it, but in the most abstract and superficial manner. I would observe, then, that the Nature of Man, *as consciously sinful*, evinces this adaptation.

The metaphysicians of Scotland and of continental Europe would ordinarily describe man as rendered a moral being by the force of education and external circumstances; while the expounder of a faith which is sometimes termed "liberal," maintains that human nature is intrinsically pure and good—all its defilement being the result of temptation only. These are self-complacent, if not ingenious, speculations, but men—as a race—have needed no revelation to assure them of their delusiveness; for conscience, unless where stifled or stupefied, has almost universally borne a true witness here. What were the sacrifices, animal and human, of the ancient heathen but the confession of conscious guilt? What but man's degeneracy and corruption was the theme of so many ancient poets and moralists; what other character can any ingenuous mind ascribe to mankind at large—as he sees it depicted on the page of ancient history? Or if we survey the modern Hindoo in the absurdity and impurity of his idol worship—the Chinese in his infanticide—the Mohammedan with his harem, his opium, and his ablutions—or the western savage couching in the ambuscade from which he springs forth to tomahawk the old man and the infant of a hostile tribe,—what do these religious rites, these characteristic habits, everywhere proclaim but man's uniform depravity? But we need only direct the gaze within. Let any man who has no theory to fortify, no conscious terrors which he must per force vanquish, but survey himself in the mirror of conscience,—let him contemplate the God above as his Maker, Benefactor, and Judge,—and then recall his own numberless acts of ingratitude, irreverence, forgetfulness and positive rebellion, as well as of

pride, indifference, unkindness, injustice towards his fellows,—and his mouth will be dumb, or he will but articulate a single word—"guilty." Now it is to man as thus consciously sinful that the Truth, thus pure and exalted in its subjects, thus infallible, authoritative, and transparent in its intelligibleness, is addressed; and its tendency is but to give tenfold keenness to this previous consciousness of guilt. Its charge against us is, our life-long sins against Jehovah;—against Jehovah, not hidden by the thick vail of the material creation, or faintly discerned by the lamp of conscience and the torch-light of some ancient traditional faith, but shining in the full sun-light of revelation,—against Jehovah, whose holiness condemns us, whose justice must exactly execute the sentence. To this charge what shall the sinner answer? Shall he deafen his ears against it? He cannot always constrain himself to be insensible. By a resolute denial? he knows that it is essentially true. By successive palliations, each becoming the scantier, and more translucent, of his depravity? Such is its blazing light, that the truth, when once directed by divine power, can instantly pierce through all, convicting him of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. Man's obduracy, how adapted is the fire of God's truth to melt it: man's enmity, what instrument but the sword of the Spirit can slay it!

The nature of man in *its conscious need of an Expiation for sin*, equally evinces this adaptation. "How shall man be just with God:"—how shall the sinner be cleansed from his guilt and be thus entitled to Jehovah's favor:—this is the great question unceasingly asked of natural religion, and which she is never able to answer. For conscious guilt will devise and must devise, if possible, some adequate expiation. The thought of meeting a righteous God in judgment is unendurable, and who can welcome non-existence as the alternative? Where, then, O where, are reconciliation, pardon, peace, to be found! Such has been the instructive, if not the audible, language of the

heart in all ages, and man in his ignorance has looked to every quarter—above him, and around him, and beneath him—for the answer. With prayers, and tears, and groans,—with his hecatombs of oxen—with slaughtered captives—and his sons offered in sacrifice,—with macerations and stripes and wasting pilgrimages,—with intercessions of priests and saints, and of the Virgin Mary,—he has in every age approached to the footstool of the Throne, and there listened for the expected answer. But has he ever, *ever*, received it? At one time fear, at another hope, has given articulation to the convulsive workings of his own spirit, which he has mistaken for the words of the Divinity, but the voice of Jehovah has ever continued silent.

Now it is to man thus guilty, thus needy, that the Truth exclaims—"The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin:" "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Expiation complete and final, so that not one sin however crimson its dye, shall avail to condemn. And expiation by whom? By Jesus Christ, the God-Man, one with me, and one with the eternal Father. One with God, so that whatever He accomplishes in my behalf shall avail through its own infinite worthiness. One with man—with me—so that He may actually die for me, and become my intercessor before the throne, and be my sympathizing friend, and sovereign Lord above. What spirit, trembling and confounded through its sense of guilt, and looking in vain to penances—sacrifices—and works of supererogation for relief, has failed to discern the Adaptation of the Truth to all its need, the first moment that its eye has rested on the cross of Immanuel! All other remedies for its diseases are fatal quackery, but here it sees Gilead's immortal balm, here flows ever fresh the stream which issues forth from the throne. Had Socrates, when doubting whether it is possible for the Deity to forgive sin, have but heard by anticipation of the sufferings of Calvary, what a wondrous correspondence would he

have discerned between the ruin and the remedy, between the condemned sinner and the justifying Saviour!

Nor is this Adaptation less evinced, when we consider Man's Nature *in its yearnings after immortality.* Vividly conscious, strong in my freedom, my intelligence, my independence of all but the Creator, how can I contemplate for a moment the idea of annihilation! It is my essence to live, and not to die: and with these keen sensations, this active spirit, ever speeding onward from the goal of being into fuller and nobler life, how can I become a nonentity! Yes, better were poverty—slavery—a dungeon—pain—fear—bette" were any thing save infinite despair, than not to be! I grasp the living universe with a strength which Gabriel can resist as feebly as an infant, which nothing short of literal Omnipotence can overcome. But if the spirit thus asserts its title to immortality, if ancient traditions, and the creed of every extinct or existing nation, but confirm such hopes, what is this immortality to prove? If approved hereafter, are we to dwell forever on Mount Olympus, with the whole herd of ancient Grecian deities; or in the halls of Valhalla, with the Scandinavian Odico? Are we to be absorbed, with the devotee of Buddhism, into the very essence of the Divinity; or to rove eternally with the Houris, amid the bowers of a Mohammedan paradise? Is the future life to be one long succession of pleasures or pains, in solitude or society; a reviviscence, somewhat brightened—of the present life, or as unlike it as Omnipotence can effect?

What has ever broken the awful silence here brooding but the Gospel, and what is not its Adaptation to these irrepressible longings of the soul! A life hereafter, an immortality certain, emerges from the thick gloom into distinct vision, and as we trace out its elements they are seen to correspond with the loftiest and purest aspirations of which we are capable. Heaven, the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God—the treasure-

house of all that is fair and precious in the universe—the native home of angels and final abode of the redeemed—where sin and sorrow, error, fear, decay, weariness, are unknown—and where the glorified Mediator is the medium of the most rapturous communion between the spirit and its Creator,—O can saint or seraph ask for more! and what must be the tendency of such truth to transform the adamantine heart! Man's heart can indeed effectually resist even such tendencies, when unaided: but whenever the Spirit is pleased to use the appointed instrument, how does He multiply its trophies. And what are these? Souls begotten by the Truth, to be sanctified by the Truth, and thus made heirs of full salvation.

In now closing after a somewhat extended consideration of the subject, suffer me to notice for a moment *the Error which affirms, that the Instrumentality of the Truth* in promoting the soul's salvation *is a matter of mere sovereign appointment.* There are those who admit that the Truth is such an instrument, and that it is uniformly thus employed wherever the heart is renewed and sanctified, but who maintain that any other instrument would be as effectual—were such the divine pleasure, and that all instrumentality might be dispensed with—were such the divine pleasure. Such views it is also said, preëminently ascribe the due honor to Jehovah, as they represent the work of conversion to be what it really is—a simple exercise of Omnipotence. But what views upon this subject, or on any other, I would ask, really exalt God, but those which magnify His wisdom? Wisdom in Him is in its essence the same attribute as in the angel, or as in man,—the adoption of the best means for the promotion of the best ends. When then the end is, the admission of men to the holy joys of heaven, or what is virtually the same in any single instance, the work of conversion and sanctification, how must we presume that infinite Wisdom will appropriately display its resources? Is it, in other words,

wise in God, according to all the conceptions that we are capable of forming respecting this attribute, to draw the soul to himself through the influence of the Truth,—his own Truth, which he has precisely adapted in its relations to the soul to this very result? Or is it equal wisdom on his part to employ any other means, or to dispense with any instrumentality? Do such queries allow of but a single answer?

If any other means might have been as fitly thus appointed, why—let me ask—is not the heart occasionally converted through the influence of the wintry tempest, or of the sunrise; by the waving of the summer harvests, or the blooming of vernal flowers? Or if mere sovereign Omnipotence may in itself fitly perform this peculiar work, why do not the Caffre, and the Esquimaux occasionally welcome the missionary with kindred love when first landing on their shores; or why are not the literal stones of the brook, thus changed into the spiritual children of Abraham?

It is not for man in his ignorance to affirm what is here metaphysically possible, or impossible with God, but what intimation the most distant does the Bible contain that any instrumentality but that of the Truth is supposable; or that the heart of man has been capacitated to yield to any other?

Am I then asked, the intent of such interrogatories? Is it not fit, I would answer, that, on such an occasion as the present, the Adaptation of the Truth to promote the salvation of men, should be considered in its various relations; —the Adaptation of that Truth, which is the basis of all preaching, and of all ministerial instruction? Yes, I would ever magnify the Truth, not only as embodying all that we know of Jehovah in the wonders of his grace; but as also the only means by which that grace becomes salvation.

Suffer me also to remark, that we here discern *what is*

the kind of Preaching, which God may be expected to bless. It is not the preaching which consists of dissertations on natural religion, disguised under evangelical phraseology; it is not elegant disquisitions on morality; it is not mere Biblical criticism—however elaborate and profound. As little is it the argumentation or the deductions of pure polemic theology, or any speculative discussion, however ingenious—on unimportant topics. All such preaching is, at the best, but an exhibition of the preacher's learning, or of his acuteness. The only true preaching, if the views of this discourse are scriptural; the only preaching which may be confidently expected to secure the divine blessing, is that which consists of clear exhibitions—earnest inculcations of "the Truth." The Truth, not in its mere external evidences; not as mainly embodied in rites and ordinances and ecclesiastical organizations; but in its internal and all-pervading life, in its faith and godliness. The Truth, not as primarily consisting of some one fundamental doctrine, or paramount duty, but as constituting the complete circle of evangelical faith and practice. Happy indeed are the people who are regularly thus instructed; and such—Brethren and Friends—will, I doubt not, be the preaching of him who this day becomes your Pastor.